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MENTAL HYGIENE
in
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I Introductionpage 1

Definition, methods and objects of mental hygiene -1; history of the movement -2; present popularity -3; purpose of this paper -5.

Chapter II Methods of Evading Realitypage 8

Regression and fixation-8; bullying -12; flight-into-pleasure-12; fixations in religious education-13; sex fixations-17; vocation fixations-19; fictions-21; projective imagination-21; danger of complete satisfaction with life-22; wish-thinking-22; fact-thinking in religion-25; introjection-26; micro-paranoia-28; flight-into-disease-29; micro-manic and micro-depressive-31; fear-33; facing reality in religion and the church-38.

Chapter III Making For a Facing of Reality.... page 40

The expansive personality-40; emotions and the expansive personality-41; music-42; poetry-48; humor-49; thoughtful conversation-49; biography-50.

Chapter IV More Specific Recommendations.....page 51

Adult education-51; parents' groups-53; use of the project principle-55; adequate expression needed-56; relation of learning to doing-55; book learning- 57; creative education-57; psychological poisons-58; training of ministers-59; individual "cure of souls"-62; the confessional-64; mental hygiene clinics-66.

Chapter V Conclusion.....page 68

Bibliography.....page 71

CHAPTER I

Mental hygiene is, strictly speaking, the preventive approach to the problem of mental health. As generally used, however, it connotes also the treatment of minor mental disturbances. From this point of view it becomes the prevention of major mental disorders through the treatment of minor disorders, as well as the effort to prevent all lack of mental balance and instability.

That the methods and the objects of mental hygiene are not unanimously agreed upon by all psychologists is evident in the differences in the following definitions of mental hygiene. Helen L. Myrick says, "Mental hygiene can be described as a health movement, as a philosophy, and as a matter of personal practice."¹ Burnham indicates that the aim of mental hygiene is the integration of the mind. The aim is, he further says, "not only the prevention of acute mental disorder, but the development of wholesome interests and habits of healthful mental activity in all normal children, and adults, habits that insure happiness and efficiency as well as sanity."² Overstreet says, "Making people, from childhood up, aware of the pseudo-logic of wish-thinking must be our next step in the education of the race, if, indeed, our civilization is to advance toward

¹ "Mental Hygiene as a Character Builder"- Helen L. Myrick.
"R.E."-Sept. 1929.

² "The Normal Mind" - Burnham

full and triumphant fact-thinking." He also emphasizes the necessity of the development of expansive reactions, rather than contractive ones.¹

Organized efforts for the promotion of mental hygiene had their inception in the work of Clifford W. Beers. The remarkable story of his experience is well told in his book, "A Mind That Found Itself." It is the story of a man who "went insane," was subject to the brutal treatment customarily given such unfortunate people at that time in the asylums and other institutions, and who found his own way out to sanity and mental balance. The remarkable part of his experience is that he was conscious afterward of all that happened to him, and was able, with the aid of notes made during his period of "insanity" to write the whole story most graphically. After his final recovery, he devoted the rest of his life to the movement called mental hygiene, feeling confident that many of the unfortunates still in the same condition from which he had recovered could be helped to restore themselves to balance and sanity again. So he led the fight against the prevailing form of treatment given mentally unbalanced people, and for a treatment which would help them "find themselves," and which would make the lot of all, both those who could be "cured" and those who were really incurable, more comfortable and free from the traditional brutality which he experienced and which he saw other unfortunates experiencing.

¹ "About Ourselves"- H.A. Overstreet

Through his efforts the National Committee for Mental Hygiene was formed in February, 1909. It began active work in 1912, with a Division on the Prevention of Delinquency also functioning. There are at present similar leagues in Great Britain, France, Belgium, South America (Brazil) and South Africa. There are at least 36 state organizations in this country. The aims of the National Committee in this country are given as follows:

1. After-care of the patient, including an investigation into the mental stability of the rest of his family.
2. Education in mental hygiene.
3. Legislation to provide adequate care for mental unsoundness.
4. The building of popular opinion to favor adequate care for those who are mentally unsound.

That mental hygiene, or something that passes by that name, is increasingly popular today may be gathered from the increasing number and strength of various mental healing groups, some of them fads, some fakes, and some based on the best psychological knowledge available. The most prominent of the movements which are based in general on misunderstanding is Christian Science. This organization (one hesitates to call it a religion, although it functions as such to some outward appearance) is growing in numbers and favor continually. And this despite the high-handed policy which its leaders would like to follow with all literature unfavorable to its reputation or the reputation of its founder. One has but to read briefly in a true life of Mary Baker Eddy to

realize the mental unsoundness and total lack of ability to think consistently which characterized her entire life. The only place where she really shone and justified the respect for her ability which her "children" have for her was where money was concerned. In the field of money-grabbing she showed a masterly talent that was nothing short of genius. And she left her "children" in such an attitude that they were always ready the next time to contribute again. This, of course, is not the story which the Scientists themselves tell or believe, but it is the only interpretation which the reading of impartial accounts permit of the life of the founder of this great movement.

The very greatness of this movement, and the loyalty of its adherents, however, force us to the conclusion that there must be at least some grain of truth in it, something of value. This "something" is undoubtedly the use of the power of the mind to relieve mental difficulties. To the person who is nervously unstable, Christian Science offers a way of using the power of the mind to relieve and to help the individual attain stability. This relief comes whether the individual thinks he has some organic trouble or disease or not. And if he thinks his trouble is organic, he of course thinks that Christian Science has relieved him of an organic trouble. The actual help that he has found in Christian Science he could find in any religion properly presented with his need in mind, or in psychology itself.

Other evidences of the growing popularity of mental

healing are found in New Thought, Coueism, (?), and the many other cults and religions that emphasize the importance of right thinking above all else. There is also, too, a growing patronage of psychiatrists and psycho-therapists, with an increasing interest in psycho-analysis. So keen is the interest in this sort of thing that many have self-styled themselves psychiatrists, psychoanalysts and psycho-therapists without adequate preparation for the work they are claiming to be able to do. Many of them are people with good basic medical or psychological training, but do not realize that special training is vitally necessary for those who would successfully deal with mental instability.

Passing notice should also be taken of the increasing use of psychology (or what passes for psychology) in vocational guidance, in determining a worker's fitness for various kinds of work, in otherwise helping to meet the personnel problems of industry, in intelligence tests of various sorts and descriptions, in developing salesmanship ability, etc. Psychology is undoubtedly popular, and growing more so. That much of its popularity is extremely beneficial for all concerned goes without saying. That some of it should be poor psychology, and that some good psychology should be ineffectively used, is natural and inevitable.

The aim of this paper is to consider some of the principles of mental hygiene in their relation to religious education. Of some of these principles we shall be able

to suggest applications in the field of religious education. Others of them will be presented because they seem to be worthy of consideration by religious education, even though specific suggestions as to their application cannot be made.

This presentation does not pretend to be either systematic or logical. It seeks to stack mental hygiene up against religious education and to note the points at which they either now make contact or should make contact.

"Mental hygiene", in the words of H.S. Elliott, "contributes to religious education both a point of view and a methodology."¹ Bad conduct used to be considered an evidence of sin. From the point of view of mental hygiene it is considered as a means of getting that which cannot be secured in any other way known to the individual. It is considered as ill-health of the personality. Mental hygiene blames the parents and those responsible for the upbringing of the child, rather than the child himself, for bad conduct. It seeks to find the causes of bad conduct in an unhealthy environment, rather than in a theory of innate sin.

Mental hygiene considers behavior difficulties as evidence of deeper trouble. Sometimes this trouble is physical in cause, as an organic trouble. Sometimes it is both physical and mental. Sometimes it is entirely mental. Treating behavior difficulties as such without seeking their cause is comparable to taking aspirin for

¹ "Mental Hygiene and Religious Education" - Harrison S. Elliott-
"Religious Education"- Sept. 1929.

a persistent and continuous head-ache, or rubbing liniment on a joint that remains swollen and painful. Mental hygiene continually asks "why" in the face of behavior difficulties. And behavior difficulties are one of the surest indications of mental disturbance or lack of complete stability. Although not the only indication of the need for that which mental hygiene has to offer, it is often the most noticeable, especially in the case of children. Why is this particular form of conduct indulged in? What is the cause of it? Has the individual been thwarted in obtaining satisfaction in more normal ways, and resorted to this objectionable way, usually unconsciously? Mental hygiene knows that the practice of sex perversions, swearing, lying, stealing, bullying, etc. will continue until the child (or older individual) no longer needs them, because he has found some better way of obtaining the same satisfactions sought (probably unconsciously) in the objectionable practices.

Mental hygiene knows that the state of one's mental health affects "just those relationships necessary for satisfaction in living - our relationships with family, friends, co-workers. These relationships are the very substance of our emotional lives, the materials out of which we build them. If then, we come to these relationships with a disorganized or improperly developed emotional life, faulty emotional habits, immature methods of reacting to emotional stimuli, we are defeated in these relationships before we start- the very associations that alone can make for successful and satisfying living."¹

¹ Quoted from "Mental Hygiene", Frankwood E. Williams, in the article by Myrick previously noted.

CHAPTER II

A fruitful conception of mental hygiene which will engage our attention now is that suggested by Overstreet of turning individuals from wish-thinking to fact-thinking. Another way of expressing this idea is to state it as the turning from facing unreality to the facing of reality. Most, if not all, mental difficulties have their origin in the attempt to escape reality by facing toward unreality,- in wish-thinking rather than fact-thinking.

This chapter will consider some of the forms which wish-thinking takes,- some of the many ways in which individuals seek to escape reality. Because all of these powerfully affect the mental health and the happiness of the individuals concerned they are of vital importance to religious education, even if we cannot always see just where their consideration fits into our present educational program. Religious education would be tremendously more effective if it gave more attention to the problem of mental ill-health. Anything that concerns this important matter is of importance to religious education and worthy of the attention of all engaged in that work, whether it can all be specifically tied up with our present religious educational program or not.

One common form of evading reality is regression to the infantile. Let it be emphasized here that these evasions and wish-thinkings and facings toward unreality are in very large part, if not always, unconscious. One of the first, and most effective steps, in their removal

is bringing them to the conscious attention of the person concerned, and showing him just what he is doing and why he is doing it.

Do we encourage this manner of evasion in our church schools? One form which regression takes is pushing off the disagreeable, or procrastination. We believe in the educational value of student officers in the departments (especially the older groups) of our church school, and in counselling them in the affairs of their group rather than doing the actual executive work ourselves. But how often does such student government prove relatively ineffective because of the habit of postponing the doing of the hard tasks? A young person is given the responsibility of preparing for a specific occasion. It may be sharing in a worship service, or preparing for a social affair or making a survey relative to a proposed service project. Too often the counsellor must furnish all the initiative, or the task would not be done. Especially if the work is new and unfamiliar, or at all difficult, the young person responsible for its execution delays and delays, until finally the counsellor must do it himself, or a postponement of date must be arranged, or hurried last minute preparations are made which are far from satisfactory to any concerned. And yet because those concerned are young people, and we realize how busy they are with other activities, and we don't want to arouse their possible anger by criticism, is not the tendency all too often to condone such procrastination, such putting-off of

the difficult? This is neither good education for future and present living, nor good mental hygiene for a well balanced personality.

Regression shows itself too in tantrums. The spoiled child who is used to having his own way at home goes immediately into a fit of tantrums when things do not go all his way at church school. Perhaps if he is in the Beginners' or Primary Departments it may be his first intimate contact with other children on a basis of equality. When the bush church school teacher permits these tantrums to gain for the child that which he can gain in no more acceptable manner the foundation for continued regression into the infantile when reality is not sufficiently satisfying is begun. In most church schools the average teacher is too busy to be able to give such behavior the attention it deserves, and she does that which will bring quiet and order most quickly to the disturbed room. The average teacher, also, would probably have no idea of the scientifically correct way to approach such a problem if she did have the time and the inclination to attempt a solution of it. We can go but a short distance in any discussion of the problems of religious education before we come up against the matter of lack of adequately trained leaders.

We see at once, too, that if religious education is to adequately approach these behavior difficulties from the point of view of mental hygiene it cannot content itself with improvement alone of the teaching work within the church

itself, but must go into the home, where behavior difficulties generally have their start, and where they can be either greatly reduced or greatly exaggerated. The matter of parent training in mental hygiene and the point of view which it brings will be discussed later.

The matter of regression seems to be closely allied with that of fixation. Fixation, instead of being a regression to an infantile level from a higher one, is the remaining on that level beyond the normal or average length of time in the life of the person. Both procrastination and tantrums may be either an evidence of regression or of fixation.

Extreme self-indulgence is an evidence or may be an evidence of one or the other of these methods of evading reality. In the past religion has often been considered as teaching the necessity for stern self-repression and self-control. Regression from this point of view might quite conceivably lead to an extreme in the other direction, that of self-indulgence. Religious education should help people to sublimate and re-direct their powerful urges, although recognizing the necessity of self-control at times, until suitable ways of sublimation can be achieved. In our present form of social living we will probably always need, for the highest social living, the ability to control ourselves and our inner urges. But control and repression are emergency measures only, and the vital importance of expression along suitable lines needs to be kept constantly in mind. There is no more important task facing religious education than this, and none that promises more for the happiness of the people

of the world.

Bullying may be an evidence of fixation or regression. In much of life bullying is the commonly accepted manner of living. The strong prey on the weak. All is fair in love and war and business. That business is professing to be getting over this point of view is a statement to be accepted with gratitude, but gratitude tinged with the acceptance of the fact that this is so largely because business found that the other way was not paying as large dividends as it used to. If a situation ever arose in which the old style cut-throat competition made more money than more humane methods of business, it is doubtful if many business men would refrain from "regressing" again.

Religious education should teach the relative ineffectiveness of bullying in all relationships of life, and its absolute incompatibility with the conception of a social order built on the principles of Jesus. It should show bullying for what it is, a regression into the infantile, where the stronger child takes what he wants and rules the nursery, to the discomfiture of all others and his own ultimate sorrow when he finds himself without friends and the object of hatred.

An example of regression or fixation prominent in recent years is the flight-into-pleasure of great masses of folk who were unable to face the world soberly and seriously. Religious education needs to teach people to meet reality, and to encourage a vigorous facing of an imperfect world

and a dynamic attempt to better it. Christian people believe that this can best and most successfully be done through the application of the fundamental principles of Jesus. The upward progress of mankind comes only as the result of effort, of sacrifice, and of a facing of things-as-they-are with a determined effort to make them more like things ought to be. Fosdick says, "Human history is not a smooth well-rolled lawn of soft ascents; it is mountainous, precipitous, terrific, a country where all progress must be won by dint of intelligence and toil and where it is as easy to lose the gains of civilization as it is to fall over a cliff or to surrender a wheat field to the weeds. The world needs something more than a soft gospel of inevitable progress. It needs salvation from its ignorance, its sin, its inefficiency, its apathy, its silly optimism and its appalling carelessness."¹ Helping people to face life and the perplexing problems of the world in that attitude is both good Christianity and good mental hygiene.

Too often the religious education of our churches encourages fixation in the concepts of things religious. To a little child in the Primary Department, God is presented as a loving Heavenly Father, and nothing more, because that is all the child can understand. But it is tragic when the church encourages the individual to hold all through his life the same conception of God that met his needs when he was seven years old. In a physical universe in which order

¹ "Christianity and Progress" - Harry Emerson Fosdick.

apparently prevails everywhere the conception of God as a Father needs enlarging, so that God is at least no longer thought of as an elderly, benevolent appearing, white-bearded man, which is the concept children often get, no matter how we may try to teach the idea of God as a spirit. In childhood, God is often, and naturally, someone to whom a child can appeal for the things which he wants. How many people go through life thinking of God as a person or power whose primary business is to answer their prayers for things?

Fixations in regard to the concept of God naturally are closely related to those in regard to the concept of prayer. Here again much present day religious education is permitting the concept of prayer taught to Beginners and Primary children to remain without any fundamental alteration or improvement throughout the church school life of the child? We say in theory that the concepts taught small children are such as can be broadened and enlarged as the child grows older without tearing anything down. But all too often the enlargement and broadening are more theory than actuality, and we attempt to discuss religion with a high school young person on a basis appealing to their age and interests when we have not helped them to vitally enlarge their concepts of God, of prayer, of Jesus, of the nature of humanity, of the nature of the world from those they were taught in their early years in the church school.

The world is full of tremendous problems today. If religion is going to help men to meet these problems,

and to win their way through, it has got to be a man's religion.

One is expected to read with a catch of tender emotion in the throat the story of the soldiers, who, facing death and wanting to pray, prayed "Now I lay me down to sleep, etc," that being all they knew, or remembered, in the way of a prayer. Such a story, instead of arousing tender thoughts, ought rather to arouse a profound dissatisfaction with the religious education, or lack of it, that sent young men out to meet life with no more mature and adequate conception of the possibilities residing in communion with the Spirit of the Universe. Such fixation, encouraged many times by our educational process, keeps individuals spiritually immature and childish. Jesus is reported as saying that the Kingdom of God belonged to the child-like, not the childish.

There is something fine in the picture of a fine old man or woman who has gone through life with the simple faith of a child. Their life has undoubtedly greatly enriched the lives of those about them, and living in this simple faith has brought to them a great happiness and peace and contentment. But unfortunately there are very few people in this complex world who are able to find satisfaction in such a simple faith. For them faith has to be more mature, more involved, or they have none.

In a certain general sense it might perhaps be said that the conservative group in Protestantism today is composed of those who in a large measure find it possible to stick to the simple faith of their childhood (and there is

the temptation to say also, the childhood of the Christian thinking of the race); while that other great group commonly called the liberal group is composed of those who in large measure find it impossible to continually live with the simple faith of childhood and must think their way through to a more mature conception of God, of Jesus, the world, etc. Not that they by choice relinquish the simple and satisfying faith of childhood. Matters would be much simpler for them if they could retain it. But being unable to do so, in the light of modern knowledge of the nature of the world in which we live and of a returning study of Jesus himself and his teachings (rather than of the statements of belief men have previously made about him) they are faced with the necessity of constructing more complex and more mature concepts of things religious.

Inasmuch as it is growing increasingly impossible for young people to reach adulthood today without facing such problems as will make forever impossible the simple faith of their fathers (or grandfathers) it becomes the duty of religious education to prevent this spiritual fixation which is more and more resulting in the renouncement of all religious faith.

The breaking away from the simple "faith of our fathers" which apparently is necessary if religion is to be vital to the great mass of people today involves the danger of another fixation. This breaking away is, of course, actually a search for freedom. But is this to be

simply "freedom from" or "freedom for"? When a baby or small child is held so tightly that they cannot move a muscle, the immediate result is a tremendous struggle for freedom. For freedom from the bonds which held them. Unless the freedom which we are seeking in religion is to be a fixation on childish levels it must be more than just freedom from. It must be freedom for. Freedom for a closer relationship with the Spirit of the Universe as we know that Spirit today. Freedom for constructive thought which will make religion vital and effective in the lives of many people. Freedom for a new service to all mankind. Freedom for a more thorough living of the Abundant Life, and freedom that will make it possible to teach this supreme Way of Life more effectively.

If it is the business of religion to permeate all of life and of religious education to concern itself with anything that has to do with a more abundant life, in any aspect of life, then it is the business of religious education to take note of certain other fixations which profoundly affect the happiness of men and women. These are not traditionally considered as being within the scope of religious education, but are important enough to justify at least passing attention. They must be presented briefly, as any more lengthy treatment would be forced to extend itself far beyond the bounds of this paper.

Sex fixations are powerful factors in making for unhappiness. And they are seldom recognized for what they are by the people concerned. There is a certain stage in

the adolescence of the average individual when he is in love with love. It is known as the falling-in-love stage. It is a perfectly natural thing for young people to be in this condition. But the unfortunate thing about it is that most of our movies and many of our books present this stage only of love. Hence there is an ever-increasing number of people whose development is fixated on that level, and who never seek that more mature love, which is creative love. Creative love creates not only new life in new beings but also a new combined life out of the two sharing life.

The average pastor is constantly called upon to face situations of marital unhappiness and discord. Are not many of these due to this sort of fixation, where one or both of the parties concerned is constantly seeking that thrill that comes with falling in love, and not knowing and not seeking that greater and richer experience of truly creative love? Is it not one of the tasks of religious education to help young people to see and appreciate the necessity and the opportunity of moving on in their love-life beyond the adolescent stage of being in love with love, or in love with falling-in-love?

Another fixation that is fatal to marital happiness is the parent-fixation. The adult who feels for his parents the same close attachment that he felt as a child, and who is as dependent on them for guidance, for authority, etc., is unfit to marry. This, of course, is not to imply that there should be any lessening of affection for one's parents

as one grows older, but that this affection is not the dependent affection of the child. Harsh as it may sound on first reading, the aim of the home should be to make its growing members more and more independent of the home.

Parent fixations are due in large part to the selfishness of the parent, who wants his children to be his children always, and to the failure of growing individuals to develop that self-reliance which will eventually make them citizens of the world in their own right and able to stand on their own feet. The parental selfishness is not always conscious, perhaps seldom so. Generally it masquerades under the unconscious rationalization of desiring to help and protect the growing members of the family. Which is of course highly commendable in its place, but should be that sort of help which will eventually help them to stand on their own feet.

Religious education should seek to meet this tendency on the part of the parents. The best way is through parent classes and discussion groups, and individual conferences with parents whose children show evidence of failure to be developing toward independence.

Religious education has already as one of its duties the task of vocational guidance. There is a vocation fixation that should be guarded against. Certainly one of the necessary qualifications for a truly happy and abundant life is joy in one's life work. The chief reason, probably, why this is seldom realized, or realized in such a comparatively few cases is that there is not attempt to find out what the

individual is best fitted to do. Vocational guidance seeks to find this out, and to advise as to kinds of work that would be suited to a person's abilities and temperament. When this is not done the person generally drifts into the first job that presents itself, and then drifts again when a little more money is available somewhere else or when his dislike for the work he is doing becomes so great as to cause him to leave. Vocational fixation, however, is a factor that should not be neglected. It means the choice of a vocation based on reasons that appealed in childhood, but that should be superseded by more fundamental and vital reasons in the more mature mind.

Probably most boys today want to be aviators. They have no conception of the qualities and capabilities demanded today to be successful in aviation, to say nothing of the more stringent qualifications which will prevail in the years immediately ahead. There will undoubtedly be a not inconsiderable number of these boys who will leave school in a few years, as soon as they can, and try for the first job they can find around an aviation field. The vocational guidance which religious education is seeking to give should keep out a watchful eye for such tendencies.

Another example of this vocational fixation occurs in those meetings like the Christian Endeavor conventions of former days at least, and to a certain extent those of today, of making such an appeal to the emotions of the impressionable high school youth assembled that many would be

led, with the highest idealism, to pledge themselves for the ministry or for missionary work, without any conception at all as to their fitness or lack of it for the difficult callings to which they were pledging themselves.

Another way in which people seek to evade reality is by building up fictions. When they cannot meet actual conditions they take refuge in fictitious environment. Much religion of former days, and some of today, encouraged a withdrawing from actual life, and the building up of a fictitious environment. This environment was builded to choice, when one's choices could not be attained in the actual environment of life. Mystics, especially the more extreme ones, live in another world, a dream world, where things are as they wish they were in the actual world. The wish being unconscious, of course.

Projective imagination is also a method of facing unreality. One's own imaginary pictures are conceived as being in the minds of others. Or rather, one imagines that others are thinking certain things, usually about oneself. This form of evasion of reality often manifests itself in shyness. The curse of shyness cannot be appreciated by one who has not experienced it. Just such an apparently small matter as this may lead to mental disturbances of large proportion. The social program of the church should provide development for those who are shy. Extreme cases should receive special treatment, should be given special opportunities to overcome this handicap and form

the habit of making more normal social contacts. This may seem a small thing for religious education to concern itself about, but it really is of large importance for the future "abundant life" of the individuals concerned.

There is a danger that in overcoming an individual's inabilities to make normal contacts and in helping him to face reality rather than evading it, we may breed a satisfaction with himself that is deadly to further growth. Religion should always bring a high and noble dissatisfaction with one's own life and with the lot of mankind. Not a continual worrying and fretting but a constant desire to attain ever higher levels of life, both for oneself and for mankind as a whole.

One of the most popular forms of the evasion of reality is wish-thinking. This is largely a matter of not accepting any ideas we don't like, of confining our thinking, if such it can be called to considering those facts that bolster up our philosophy of life. Prosperous and comfortable people in general don't like to be told of all the suffering in the world. It disturbs their smug complacency and their enjoyment of life. They don't want to be continually feeling that they ought to share some of the plenty which they have with those who are less fortunate. So they evade the issue by thinking and saying that the reports are undoubtedly over-exaggerated, that it wouldn't do any good to try to help anyway, that the unfortunate people wouldn't appreciate their interfering, etc., etc.

Wish-thinking is especially prevalent in much Christian thinking. Probably the more conservative of our Christian people, those whom we sometimes call "fundamentalists" (although they are often the ones who are really farthest from the "fundamentals" of the teachings and the life of Jesus as the more liberal interpreters of Christianity consider them) are more liable to this sort of evasion than the more liberal Christians. Their own religious beliefs are definitely and finally arrived at, they do not consider the most remote possibility of their being wrong, or of there ever being any necessity of their changing their opinions. All who do not believe exactly as they do are wrong, and not true believers. When any facts are presented to them, even out of the Bible, which they profess to revere so completely, which do not jibe with their point of view, they dismiss them as being untrue, and say that their interpretation of the particular fact presented is the only correct one. In other words, they will not admit any new material to their minds. Their thinking is mulling over and over the same material, the same set of so-called facts. Their thinking is directed by their wishes, rather than by the facts available.

It would be unjust not to remark in passing that many so-called "modernists" are just as unintelligent, in refusing to admit to their thinking the experience of the race when there is no scientific theory yet discovered to

explain that experience. Narrow-mindedness is not always on the side of the conservative, but the scientific point of view does tend to make men anxious to have all the facts at their disposal.

The way the minds of men set in the midst of the stirring experiences of war is an excellent illustration of extreme wish-thinking. Propaganda and news that never told the other side of the story were swallowed hook, line and sinker. When stories of the atrocities committed by German soldiers (we called them Huns) on women in the parts of Belgium and France occupied by the German army were told us we never questioned their veracity. To do so would have been disloyal, would have made one that most despised of creatures, one who was not heart and soul for utterly crushing the enemy. We were not given the facts as a basis for our thinking. We would not have believed them if they had been supplied us. Our desire was to win, and to do that we had to conceive of our enemy in the worst possible terms, and hence we would not let our minds play traitor to our contry by attempting an honest thought.

The same thing is evident in many other phases of life. The good salesman never admits any defects in his product, although he might be a better salesman in the long run if he did and sought his factory to improve on it. He wants his product to be the best, because then he can sell it better. And so he unconsciously or consciously assumes that such is the case.

Many a preacher wants to say the final and authoritative word on his subject, and so he dismises all evidence to the contrary. He would be a much more effective preacher if his desire was not thus to be the omnipotent, but to be a learner with his congregation, but that view of preaching is held by only a comparative few men in the pulpit.

In the realm of science facts are supreme. While it is true many so-called scientists are prejudiced in favor of their particular theories, that is not the scientific attitude. And in the increasing sharing of the scientific attitude in all the aspects of life we find a hopeful increasing of fact-thinking. Overstreet says, "The advance of civilization has meant the gradual extension of the area of fact-thinking."¹

What are the consequences for religion if it encourages fact-thinking in the realm of religion and the church? Can religion exist on a fact-thinking basis alone?

It can, provided we realize that not all of the facts of the universe in which we live are as yet known, and provided we accept as valid the facts discovered by experience as well as those discovered in the laboratory and the clinic. As long as all the facts of the universe are not known there is of course room for much argument as to whether certain experiences point to facts or not. And as long as we accept as valid the experience of the individual, when that experience is substantiated by the experience of

¹ "About Ourselves"- Overstreet, p. 80.

others, even though we have not theory in psychology or physics to explain that fact, we must make allowance for a great variety of interpretations of the same experience. And by continually studying our own experience and the experience of others we can gradually separate fact from imagination and prejudice. We can, in other words, gradually turn in our religious thinking, from wish-thinking to fact-thinking.

Fact-thinking is the only sound basis for religious education. Quoting again from Overstreet, "Obviously one of the next great conquests to be made in this human enterprise of ours is the extension of the area of fact-thinking into the region of our emotional life. How is that to be done? The answer is: in precisely the same way that we have done it with mathematics and logic and the technique of science: by teaching."¹ The realization of this is of vital importance to religion, and substantiates the assumptions of religious education.

Another form which the evasion of reality takes is called introjection. That is being too much influenced by one's environment. The otherwise scientifically minded man who is influenced by war-time propaganda to admit to his mind statements which ordinarily would never have passed the barrier of his critical examination as to their veracity as facts is an example of introjection. The popularly-called "yes man" is another example. Another is the "fussy" person. The introjective mind is uncritical, either in all

¹ Overstreet "About Ourselves" p. 80.

respects or in some. It may show itself in a tendency to lap up eagerly all gossip and accept it and pass it on as gospel truth. It may show itself in a slavish submission to the style of the moment, in clothes, in language, in other interests, without any regard to the real value or lack of it in that which is accepted. It is manifested in any horror of being "different."

One of the objectives of religious education (as of all education) should be to develop in a person the ability and the desire to think for himself in all the realms of life, including the religious (which in itself is a matter of the whole life.) The aim of sociology seems to be to help a person so to adjust himself that he can live in harmony with his environment. The aim of religious education should be to give a person the ability to see when his environment is pointing in the wrong direction and the courage and the willingness to break with it when the betterment of all will be secured by so doing. While adjustment to one's environment is essential for the most pleasurable living, there are times when a break with that environment makes for the greater satisfaction of all in the end.

Both the extreme pessimist and the extreme optimist are evading reality by their exaggerated views. Religious education should help people to see life steadily and to see it as a whole. Religion should present those values in life which are abiding and eternal. At the same time, it should frankly face all the unhappiness in the world at present

and seek in every way to help individuals attain the Abundant Life and at the same be striving to mold the social order ever closer to the ideals expressed by Jesus in his conception of the Kingdom of God. Neither the seamy side of life nor the sunny side are the whole picture by themselves. And both together are not the whole picture unless they include a conception of the possibilities of infinite improvement in both individual man and in the social order.

Evasion of reality sometimes results in what Overstreet calls micro-paranoia, or paranoia-in-the-little. The chief characteristics of the paranoiac are delusions of importance and the conception of others as always being to blame when things go wrong. In the "full-fledged" paranoiac these delusions are so extreme as to amount to "insanity." In the micro-paranoiac they show themselves in these ways: 1. An egotism which is not justified by real achievement; 2. An unwillingness to take blame upon oneself; 3. A tendency to dispute, especially over matters of small importance; 4. Unsocial behavior.¹

It religious education is going to deal with such conditions as this it must have enough contact with a child to enable such symptoms to be noticed and then studied, and to work out through life experiences a treatment. Anything which serves to increase the contacts between the church and the child is helpful, such as club groups, week-day church schools, social affairs, student committees, etc.

¹ Overstreet- "About Ourselves" p. 86.

And in addition to the additional contacts there must of course be teachers and leaders trained enough to recognize such symptoms when they see them, and to be able to make a careful study and intelligent report of them. That this should be a function of religious education seems evident from the neglect which it receives from other sources. Parents do not recognize such symptoms, partly perhaps because they get used to the peculiarities of their children. The public school does not bother much with "problem-children", although it is giving them more attention than ever before, and less does it seek to understand those who are unsocial, unresponsive, lacking in ability to take responsibility and always evading the blame or responsibility for their actions when these are not troublesome enough to be classed as "problem-children."

By watching for early conceits, self-excusing, self-pityings, boasting to build up self-esteem, whining, exclusiveness, etc., religious education may be able to help young life to attain to wholesome objective achievement and to avoid unwholesome fictional achievement.

Another rather common and also hard to recognize evasion of reality is the flight-into-disease. At the root of such disease is a situation to which the patients are not equal. Overstreet says, "The most important safeguard against the onset of this subtle disease is, first of all to teach the young life not to avoid difficulties."¹ Here he

¹ Ibid. p. 91.

is speaking, of course, of disease that is mental in its origin. And again we should remind ourselves that this flight into disease, as other evasion, is generally unconscious, and not recognized as being anything but a genuine disease.

Flight into disease is easy for children. They are too young to be wholly clear as to their motivation. The church school teacher often is told by the child of his ailments, and here is an opportunity of watching for those that seem to be this sort of thing. The teacher, of course, must understand the psychology involved and be able to recognize the symptoms of such flight into disease when presented.

All teachers should be warned against being too sympathetic and too tender with sickness in children. The healthy child may see that he is missing a lot of attention by not being sick, and such flight into disease may follow. Being over-solicitous with sick children encourages stories of ever greater sickness and perhaps unconscious feigning of sickness. A sick child should be given mild sympathy, and advised how to avoid that particular illness again. The healthy boy or girl should be held up as the example, and sickness regarded as a misfortune. Perhaps there could be some recognition of the child who had a perfect attendance record, or at least was not sick during the year. Especially in the younger departments, the Beginners and the Primary, would this have a tendency to place a premium on

health rather than on sickness.

Where sickness is suspected as being of this flight-into-disease type the first thing to do is to look for the cause, for the particular situation that could not be met otherwise. Perhaps it was lack of attention in the group. Perhaps it was some assignment that was distasteful. Perhaps it was a desire to have the sympathy of the teacher. Perhaps an unpleasant experience at church school motivated this unconscious evasional sickness in order to make attendance on a future Sunday impossible.

Just as we found the micro-paranoiac seeking to evade reality through those ways which men carried to a more extreme degree make that form of insanity we call paranoia, so Overstreet tells us we have others who evade reality through a resort to those ways which in the extreme we call the manic and depressive phases of insanity. These evaders he calls micro-manics and micro-depressives. They are to be seen all about us, if we learn to recognize the symptoms.

The characteristics of the micro-manic are:¹ 1. An abundance of energy; 2. A high excitability; 3. An abnormal distractibility; and 4. Mental and emotional miscellaneity. Practical religion may have a great restraining value for such overly exuberant and distractible persons. For them the calm, meditative phases of religious life need to be emphasized. They need to learn the value of periods of quiet thought and meditation and prayer. For individuals

¹ Overstreet- "About Ourselves" p. 111.

with these tendencies religion and religious education should provide a sound basis of life, a unifying concept around which to build life's structure.

The lines along which treatment of such a condition should proceed are as follows: 1. A thorough physical examination. This condition may be caused or aggravated by over-activity in the thyroid gland. Impaired digestion may be a causal or accompanying factor. 2. A thorough mental examination. Often mental habits are the cause of micro-manic behavior. Lack of training in the habit of concentration, for example, would tend to produce this condition. The same is true of the habits of listening, of relaxing voice and muscles, and of reflective consideration.

Religious education should be able to recognize the micro-manic and the micro-depressive and do what it can for them. The micro-manic has power, but no perseverance. If this power could be conserved and utilized constructively there would be a real contribution to the work of the world. The micro-manic is very emotionally excitable. There is danger in religion, especially in the older evangelistic type, of making too much appeal to the emotions, especially perhaps to youth. While religion and Jesus and his Way of Life should challenge the love and loyalty of every person, there is a way of making it do this without causing undue excitability. The micro-manic, especially, needs to learn the lesson of emotional calm. He should have presented as an ideal the poise and calm judgment of those whose emotions

are not stirred by every appeal that comes.

We have mentioned that the micro-manic was highly distractible. Cannot religious education present Christianity to such in such a way as to make it a unifying center around which to build? Unrelated mental fragments seem to compose the religious concepts of most folks of this sort, while a relevant whole, a unified structure, should be presented as the ideal in their religious life and thinking.

Just as in the type of insanity resulting when this condition is seen in the extreme the depressive phase follows the manic phase in the micro-form. Suggestions given by Overstreet for dealing with this phase include:¹ 1. Let the person alone when he is in this condition; 2. Help him to prepare for the next mood when he is out of one mood, and "normal" again; 3. When the mood approaches seek to distract him, to take him out of himself; and 4. Help him to frankly face his own situation.

We have so far been considering some of the methods by which various personalities seek to evade reality. We have seen that one of the fundamental causes why this evasion becomes necessary is that satisfactions cannot be attained in more normal ways of living, and are unconsciously sought in these other ways.

Another cause of the evasion of reality which is even more powerful, perhaps, than this, is fear. Fear is

¹ Overstreet. "About Ourselves, pp. 117-118.

the great limiting and confining agency of life. It drives us into ourselves, it makes our personalities contractive, it robs us of the zest of life, and consciously or unconsciously (generally the latter) it causes us to seek those satisfactions in unreality which we are prevented from finding in reality because of our fear. These fear-evasions are given the name of phobias. They are almost without number in their variety.

Mc Dougall holds that phobias are not found without a sense of guilt.¹ Overstreet, while not prepared to say that this is true of all phobias, does think that a large number of phobias are without question a combination of fear and shame.²

If this is true it offers a clue to the vital part religion can play in dissipating these phobias. One of the central messages of Christianity is that God is a forgiving God. And that men should also be forgiving. The presentation of a God who forgives (provided true repentance has taken place) will be a powerful factor in helping those who acknowledge God to rid themselves of the guilt feeling, and thus to attack the blighting fear itself.

Protestant churches in this country seem to be slowly growing towards the use of some sort of a confessional. While the confessional, or the act of confessing, is of supreme value in understanding and treating all

¹ Mc Dougall, Wm. "Outline of Abnormal Psychology" p. 307.

² Overstreet- "About Ourselves." p. 124.

mental difficulties, it is perhaps of special value in this matter of fear-guilt. The "sin" that is confessed can be brought before God for forgiveness. Even the very act of telling about it unburdens the mind and gives a new sense of freedom and release. Fears themselves, when confessed and discussed, do not seem as large or dangerous as before. One of the first, and most effective, steps in over-coming fear is to bring it out into the open. In the sort of confessional that does this the church has a great opportunity to serve effectively. It hardly need be said that the role of confessor, under such circumstances, cannot be assumed by anyone, or by any minister. Special training in this art is needed to be most effective.

In our work of religious education, we have an opportunity of preventing the formation of many such phobias. Overstreet says, "There can be no question but that an untold amount of suffering has been caused by engendering in children the feeling of fear-plus-guilt."¹ By teaching the importance of this danger to parents in parent classes and groups we can save many a child from the burden of a constantly increasing load of guilt and fear. In our own church schools and other groups we may find ourselves guilty of causing this very sense of fear and guilt. The conception of God taught in the not far distant past in all churches, and now taught in many and by many well-intentioned but

¹ Overstreet, p. 127.

untrained teachers in even the most advanced church schools, is of a God who is constantly watching little boys and girls to see that when they do something naughty they are punished. Either now or in the days ahead, perhaps after death. Stern discipline, such as often prevails in our church schools, as well as sometimes in the home and the public school, makes for a constantly developing sense of naughtiness and of shame. Such ideas as that God will punish little boys who tell lies, and that the "Eye of God" is always upon one, generate a sense of shame and fear, especially in children.

Another phobia which is common in most church life is the nomic phobia. This means the fear of going against custom and tradition. It indicates a failure to assimilate new ideas, and to think originally. Overstreet says, "Adults, by the time they are grown up, are practically all custom-broken, tradition-broken, and therefore idea-broken."¹ This is especially true in the realm of religion and of church life. One of the aims of religious education must be to stimulate constant and ever-increasing thought in the realm of religion. Adults who are already in the condition mentioned probably cannot be helped greatly by attempts to stimulate them to begin thinking again. For them the best way out is to hold fast to their beliefs. But with children and young people religious education should stimulate a constant thinking and re-thinking of the concepts of religion and of the function of the church. Then they will be able to still think for themselves when adulthood is reached,

¹ Overstreet, p. 128

and there will not be the present breach between liberalism and conservatism. At least, it will not be as wide. It would be too much to hope that it could ever be removed entirely. Perhaps it is best for all concerned that it cannot, for values are conserved by both groups which either one alone would tend to lose.

But children's minds can be easily kept active, and religious education should teach and help them to think out their religious problems for themselves, and not content itself with giving them the religious concepts of others thought out a long time ago, perhaps, and embodied in the "doctrines of the church." This means that thinking for themselves should be encouraged, and should be made a pleasurable experience, both at church and at home. Then it will tend to become a habit. The attitude of the teacher and the parent thus becomes of vital importance in this matter of developing a continually growing and ever-enlarging religion. How many of our church school teachers encourage really independent thinking? Many of them feel that their task is to pass on the thoughts of one past, and that these thoughts are necessarily far better than any that their children can have. Others, making at least a pretense of encouraging thought, insist that that thought shall agree with their own thinking, or it will not be accepted as valid.

A statement of Overstreet is very important for religious education. He says, "***life is never to be advanced by the fear-shame-inducing techniques, but only by

techniques which arouse enthusiasm and give birth to joyous confidence."¹ This is equally true for the school, the home and the church school.

Behind almost all mental instability, then, is the desire of the individual (almost unconscious) to be triumphant. Triumph that is denied in the normal relations of life is sought in unreality. One who thus seeks to triumph through evasion is running away from real life. They are turning their backs on reality for the greater satisfactions found in the realm of the unreal. The triumph which is generally, if not always, sought is that of being superior. Where normal life offers no aspect in which the individual's superiority can be recognized, unconsciously superiority is sought in the unreal.

We need to ask ourselves again the question, "Does the church and religion as we know it today encourage the facing of reality?" Cannot the comforting conception of God as a refuge in time of trouble be over-emphasized and over-worked? Temporary refuge in time of sore distress is a most helpful thing. But unless it is the sort of refuge that sends an individual back to face the problems of life with new hope and new strength it is encouraging a feeling of defeatism which causes the individual to shrink from the world and its complexities, instead of facing them courageously and as successfully as is possible. "Leaning on the everlasting

¹ Ibid. p. 135.

arms" may mean that one is being buoyed up by the power that comes from God, or it may mean that one is finding shelter there from the problems of life.

The desire to be superior is a powerful one. Religious education has an opportunity of encouraging the development of leadership ability in those who need that sort of experience. By helping those who are finding it difficult or impossible to achieve superiority in any other realm of life to find a wholesome experience of superiority in leadership in the affairs of the church religious education may be helping them to find adequate satisfaction in reality and preventing an evasion into unreality. There seems to be a tendency to sometimes overdo this sort of thing, and give encouragement out of all proportion to the real success of the individual. While this may serve for the moment to bring great satisfaction to the person concerned and make him happier, it is most certainly true that such exaggerated praise tends to make all praise from the same source less highly respected. Thus seemingly making ever more exaggerated praise necessary. Let praise be given, and given generously. Far more generously than censure. But let it not be so extravagant as to breed a self-satisfaction which the actual attainments do not warrant. There are exceptions in the case of individuals who need to be given a lot of self-confidence that prove this rule.

CHAPTER III

We have been considering some of the ways in which individuals seek triumph through the unconscious evasion of reality, and some of the applications of the realization of this tendency in religious education and church life in general. We are going to turn our attention now to a consideration of some of the factors that make for a facing of reality. Applications to the work of the church will be suggested for some of these factors. Others of them seem of vital importance for the consideration of religious education, but specific applications cannot be suggested.

The development of the expansive personality is essential if the individual is to satisfactorily face reality. Expansiveness centers interest in others. The completely expansive personality would have at least the following characteristics: He would be sympathetic; he would admire people and things outside himself, as art, music, Jesus and his way of life, etc.; he would be optimistic; he would encourage others; he would enjoy play; he would have a genuine sense of humor. Actually, people may be expansive in one respect and contractive in another. Overstreet says, "****the individual life is worth while in proportion as its movements are expansive."¹ Does the program of religious education as we know it today make for the expansive personalities? Insofar as it does it is

¹ Ibid. p. 157.

building for abundant living.

There is also in the truly expansive personality a body-mind unity. This makes it essential to awaken a desire for the Abundant Life before any such life can be taught. This indicates the necessity of grading our appeals to interest.

The expansive personality requires emotional nourishment. There are great numbers of emotionally undernourished children (and adults, too) in the world today. They are starved for affection, for beauty, for rhythm. They cannot appreciate the beautiful when they see it or hear it. Sulkiness in children is often due to a lack of affection. They seek to get in that way the loving attention which they didn't get in life otherwise.

There can be no really effective learning where the emotions are not involved. Quoting from Overstreet, "The gist of the whole matter, I think, lies in the foregoing. Children must indeed, take in information. But, in the first place, they must want to take it in or somehow be induced really to want it. In the second place, it must be such information as lures them on. Some day we shall be wise enough to make these two requirements the basis of all education. Then education will be a powerful factor in the building up of expansive personalities, as contrasted with most of the education of the present, which, as often as not, by the very process of over-feeding and wrong feeding builds up contractive

personalities who, having been trained to regard education as something disagreeable, push it off in the adult days as something too boresome to be tolerated."¹

Music is of tremendous influence in the development of the expansive personality. It supplies that emotional nourishment which so many people need so badly. The psychological value of music (although it would not be called that) has been realized for a long time. Shakespeare is quoted as follows, "the man who hath no music in his soul is fit for treason, stratagems and spoils." Congreve says, "Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast, To soften rock or bend the knotted oak."

Plato would have no soft music in his ideal republic, because of the deteriorating effect it would have on his ideal of stern manhood. Darwin, who lost the ability to appreciate music and poetry said it was a loss of happiness and possibly injurious to his intellect and probably to his moral character by enfeebling the emotional part of his nature.

Music plays a vital part in time of war. Then it builds the fighting spirit, arouses the emotions of patriotism, of desire to obtain revenge, etc. The part that music plays in making war possible is so well presented in a poem that it deserves inclusion:-

¹ Ibid. p. 170

² " p. 175

THIS IS WAR

War
 I abhor,
 And yet how sweet
 The sound along the marching street
 Of drum and fife; and I forget
 Wet eyes of widows, and forget
 Broken old mothers, and the whole
 Dark butchery without a soul.

Without a soul - save this bright drink
 Of heady music, sweet as hell;
 And even my peace-abiding feet
 Go marching with the marching street,
 For yonder goes the fife,
 And what care I for human life!

The tears fill my astonished eyes
 And my full heart is like to break,
 And yet 'tis all embannered lies,
 A dream those little drummers make.

Oh, it is wickedness to clothe
 Yon hideous, grinning think that stalks
 Hidden in music, like a queen
 That in a garden of glory walks,
 Till good men love the thing they loathe.

Art, thou hast many infamies,
 But not an infamy like this-
 Oh, snap the fife and still the drum,
 And show the monster as she is.

- Richard Le Gallienne.

An instrument for arousing the emotions as powerful as this needs much more serious consideration by religious education than it has yet received. If music can make peace-loving men into butchers of their fellow men, it ought to be able to make indifferent men into enthusiastic followers of a Way of Life that offers as much as the Christian life.

We need to ask ourselves now, - just what is it

that music does for us? Music has been said to be the art of thinking in sounds, thinking without verbal concepts. According to Overstreet, the secret of music is that it takes an other-wise specific concept or group of concepts, and opens them out. "And although it is without the neat sign-posts of our finite beings, it has a meaning so great, so indescribable that it seems- is this an illusion?, - to speak a wisdom which we are forever unable to form into words."¹

Music, then, liberates us from the specific and makes us feel the sheer emotions themselves. Overstreet suggests that perhaps life is unduly specific, and that music renders a great service in liberating us from such specifichness.

What then, is to determine the value of music? What is the difference between music that sends men out to kill and music that sends men out to live more nearly as Jesus taught? The difference would seem to be in the emotions aroused. Music that arouses emotions of hate and revenge make for war. Music that arouses a love for country far more powerful and inclusive than the occasion justifies, a tender passion for one's own land, and a desire to fight for that dearly beloved land, whether that land happens to be fighting for its own selfish ends or for the selfish ends of another, or even for a good cause without regard to the fact that in this service to one's

1. Ibid. p. 180.

land one is taking the lives of many of one's fellow citizens of the world who feel the same way about their country,- such music makes war possible and transforms individuals, almost in an instant, from pacifists to ardent warriors.

Music is a powerful factor in the building of the expansive personality which is the aim of mental hygiene. Quoting again, "This liberation from the specific is not only refreshing, but is of fundamental moment in the building up of the kind of expansive personality in which we are interested."¹

To be truly and nobly human an individual needs universality, both of thought and of emotion. Emotion is always tied up in us with previous associations and arouses all kinds of thoughts itself, some of which may be, and often are, glorified memories. Music, in a very real sense, taps the deeper springs of personality. It also lifts us out of ourselves. And it tends to beget it like. Music makes those who hear it want to "join in". It may be a joining of thoughts, or of emotions, or of action, as in dancing. It may tend to make all who hear it sing for joy, or to weep for sorrow, or to sigh in regret over days gone by. The detailed effect in different individuals would be different because each would have his own associations raised by the music, but the general effect would tend toward homogeneity.

This universalizing and homogenic effect of music make it of great importance to religious education. Christianity seeks to make its love, its sympathy, its understanding,

¹ Ibid. p. 183.

its tolerance, as universal as the universe itself, as did the Master. It seeks to bind people together in ties of common love for each other and for the whole world. It seeks to lift up all men to a passionate desire to serve Jesus and his cause.

Few specific suggestions can be made as to just how this can be done more effectively. While revisions of hymn books and new hymn books almost flood over us, there still seems to be a necessity for building a new type of hymn book, building from the ground up without previous prejudices or need to satisfy any group or publisher. Building a hymn book that will afford adequate means of expression of the emotions of youth and children, as well as older folks.

Group singing needs to be emphasized in our church life. When we found we could no longer sing sincerely many of the old favorite hymns, because of their out-grown theology, the hymns left us in many instances did not lend themselves to enthusiastic singing. And there is no need for confining group singing in the church to hymns alone. The songs that are sung should be carefully selected as to their effect on the group's emotions, but they need not always come from a hymn book. Perhaps the new hymn book to be built some day will contain songs of a universal appeal other than the hymns of the church.

In selecting hymns for hymn books and for singing we need to remember that the effect of the hymn is the effect of both the words and music. Many of the older hymns

which are out of date theologically and which we cannot use now owed their popularity more to the tune than to the words. And the continuing demand for them on the part of older people is more because of the tune than the sentiments expressed.

In addition to singing the church and religious education may use most effectively other forms of music, such as concerts, organ recitals, orchestras, etc. Such uses of music are common today, but the need seems to be for a more careful selection, in some instances at least, of the music played, judged according to standards somewhat like those suggested.

In our hymn books we are coming more and more to grade our hymns for different ages, both words and music being adapted to various age levels. Do we not need to use more organ and orchestra music that is specifically intended for younger members of the church family? While it is undoubtedly true that all of us need to learn to appreciate good music, there is still the possibility that if young folks and children never hear from an orchestra or the organ music that appeals then and there to them, and does for them what more complicated music does for the older music lover, they are going to develop a set against all music that is not jazz or singing. We need to learn to appreciate good music, but unless we first find something of immediate value in "higher" forms of music

will we go back often enough to cultivate the higher appreciation?

Part of an expansive personality's need is for adequate expression. Expression through music has always been a most effective outlet for those able to find that satisfaction. Should not religious education encourage more active participation in music than it does? More writing of songs, or at least of the words, and perhaps the finding of appropriate tunes, more orchestras and bands; more encouragement of individuals to master some instrument or learn to sing; more use of children's and young people's choirs; the employment of more skilled musicians, who are also skilled teachers of music, to guide the music of the church, to direct choirs and orchestras, perhaps to give music lessons to individuals who could not get them any other way; all these would seem to be a part of the lesson which religious education needs to learn if it is to use music with the maximum effectiveness.

Other forms of art, like music, move away from the specific into the significant. It is the essence of a picture, or a statue, or a building, or a piece of music, that reaches us, not the details.

Overstreet suggests that the constant seeing of thing in their essence will have a very real influence in broadening and deepening our psychological responses.

Poetry, like the other forms of art mentioned, has the same liberating effect. Poetry, however, should be known as something joyously to experience, not to study. It should be a thing of sheer joy. Poetry is largely dream,

and the makers of dreams may touch the deepest things in life. Poetry that is an inner joyous experience helps to build up resistance to gloom and despair and helps life to emerge from seclusiveness and excess of egotism.

Can anything that has such great possibilities for human happiness and enrichment as has poetry be left out of the program of religious education? Religious education cannot teach poetry as the schools do, for then they will remove poetry from the realm of a joyous experience and make it a "subject" to be studied, whether one wants to or not. But religious education can use poetry, in worship services, in young people's groups, in almost any gathering. It can have poetry in its church service, it can help its young people to find that poetry that appeals to them, and also that which will be helpful to them.

There are many other factors that contribute to the development of the expansive personality. Humor is one. Thoughtful conversation is another. A genuine sense of humor makes possible the play spirit, and makes for a more socialized individual. Self-critical humor is essential to the expansive personality. It makes life balanced and stable. Self-critical humor is a valuable help to the individual who is trying to change from contractiveness to expansiveness in his personality. Thoughtful conversation is a great revealer of the mind. Its use by leaders in religious education with individuals will help them to size

them up more accurately than would be possible otherwise.

The study of biography is of great value in religious education. It seems to have at least two major values. In the first place, it makes virtue real. It is pathetic to see the confidence with which so many church workers seek to "teach virtue", generally by a presentation of virtuous qualities, one at a time. Virtue is never challenging until a person who embodies it is challenging. The second value of the study of biography, or perhaps it shouldn't be called a study, either, is that it presents heroes who actually lived, and encourages its readers to find satisfactions in the reality of life, rather than in the unreality of fictional characters.

CHAPTER IV

In the course of the preceding discussion certain suggestions as to the modification of the program of religious education to more adequately promote the mental health of the individual and the group have been made. Some of these have been specific, many of them only general.

We are now going to consider a few more specific recommendations as to ways in which the principles of mental hygiene can find more adequate expression in the educational program of the church.

One of the most important opportunities is that presented in adult education. One of the important things that modern psychology has taught us is that the old notion that one could learn only in childhood, when the brain was "plastic" is largely a myth. We know now that the years of childhood are not the only years for learning. Overstreet goes so far as to say that the adult is more capable of learning than the child.¹ Many things that children are required to learn now in school they would learn more quickly as adults because they would then appreciate the usefulness of this knowledge. Then, too, the child is lacking in the associative richness of experience which makes learning swift and sure. Religious education too often seeks to give a child concepts of God, of Jesus, of the world, etc. which it hopes will last him all his life. The full power and majesty of God can only be realized by one who knows something of the

¹ Ibid. pp. 167-8.

findings of astronomy and of physics and of psychology. Overstreet suggests that if some of the things that should be learned in adulthood were actually postponed until that time the learning process in childhood would be less hurried and more pleasurable. There would then be a better chance to present that kind of knowledge which would keep luring him on to ever new and grander discoveries.

Is there not the tendency in religious education (not in all churches, but in many) to try to teach a child those things that should wait for later years, such as catechisms, creeds, statements of belief, etc. Such, of course, are not countenanced by modern religious educational theory today, but they seem to have still a large place in the teaching of many churches. The conceptions of God that are sometimes taught seem, too, to be the conceptions that the teacher thinks the child should have, based on the teacher's greater knowledge of the world, rather than conceptions based on the child's limited experience. The same would be true with other conceptions of things religious.

If adults, then, are capable of learning even after their earlier school days are over, religious education owes it to them to offer them opportunities and incentives to keep on learning. Nothing will help so much to preserve an open mind in an individual than to keep discovering new things. Mental hygiene considers the open mind an essential to mental stability and full mental effectiveness.

Adult classes in the newer points of view regarding

the Bible, for example, and the interpretation of it which recent investigations into documents and buried cities give us will help greatly to minimize the friction between the conservative groups and the more liberal ones in the church.

One of the most profitable forms of adult education in the church is parents' classes and discussion groups. The mental health of a child, or his lack of it, is largely the result of his home environment. Religious education can do no more important work than helping the parents to provide a home environment which is favorable to the development of an expansive personality. Many of the ways of evading reality which were considered above can be witnessed in the home. And here is the best opportunity of all of helping such children who are finding most of their satisfactions in the realm of the unreal to turn to reality.

Domineering parents are making for inferiority complexes in their children. Autocratic parents are making it impossible for their children to find the satisfaction of independent achievement in reality, and tending to send them to the unreal to find it. Parents who shield and protect their children from all the vicissitudes of life and take from their shoulders all responsibility for making decisions are encouraging the development of parent fixations, which make the individual unfit for married life later, and rob him of initiative and independent judgment.

The best time to overcome habits of evasion are when these habits are being formed. If parents understood more about mental hygiene, and were helped to be able to recognize evasions in their own children, and knew how to go about overcoming them, the result would be a great increase in the ability to see life as it actually is, and to face its problems and see them through without recourse to the satisfactions of unreality. Such is the opportunity before religious education. Through co-operation with existing agencies in the community, as the departments of psychology in university or college, mental clinics, vocational guidance bureaus, public school, Parent-Teacher Associations, etc., the church can help the parents of the children in its church school to be better parents because they understand better the mental processes of their children (and incidentally in so doing will come to better understand their own,) because they will learn to recognize sulkiness as something more than general "naughtiness" to be punished and forgotten, because they will be able to see the results of the home environment in terms of a seeking of satisfactions in unreality or of a facing of the problems of daily life bravely and honestly.

They will know when their child needs the attention of a practicing psychologist. They will be able to co-operate intelligently with him in a constructive program to help their child to full and well-rounded development. They will have the chance of talking over their problems

with other parents, and under the guidance of a leader who knows the issues at stake. There is no more effective single way of securing the mental health and full mental development of the children in the church school than parents' classes under competent leadership. Mental health or lack of it results from the individual's ability or lack of it to meet his environment satisfactorily. The environment of the home is the dominating environment in the life of the child. The home, then, has the possibility of making the child contractive, introspective, and seeking all his satisfactions in unreality, or of making him expansive, primarily interested in others and in the world around him and able to get enough satisfaction out of life to encourage the facing of reality.

Another way in which the principles of mental hygiene can find specific application in religious education is in the application of the project principle as it is conceived of by leaders in religious education today. Mental hygiene emphasizes the need for expression, for doing something, if learning is really to take place.

There are at least two important reasons for this emphasis on "doing something." First is the need for providing an adequate outlet for the emotions aroused. The well balanced mental life is the life that is finding expression for all of its emotions. This doesn't mean that such expression is to be found on the animal level.

One of the great necessities in modern life is the knowledge of how to sublimate successfully the instinctive urges which cannot be given expression on the "natural" level. The other reason for the emphasis on "doing something" in education is the fact that learning takes place much more rapidly when the thing learned is put to use. There are those who cannot conceive of any learning, real learning, that is, according to their definition, taking place apart from the use of that learning in doing something with it.

Knowledge is generated through doing. This principle is at the bottom of the project principle as we know it today. It is also strongly emphasized by mental hygiene.

There are many handicaps in the way of the church making the project principle fundamental in its educational program. There is the lack of adequate equipment, lack of training on the part of teachers and leaders, the the presence of a conservative element in almost every church (apparently) who object strenuously and with religious enthusiasm against anything new in the methods used in the church school. But religious education must accomplish this if she is to do her task with the effectiveness which is needed today.

In other words, mental hygiene tells us that learning is not really effective, has not actually taken place, until there is a change in the behavior of the individual. Anything that is taken in must in some measure be transformed into

something before it can be considered as actually learned.

Much of our present education, both within the church and outside it, is largely book training. Religious education especially must see that its opportunity is to motivate and guide new ways of living. Book learning will never do this. There must be the transfer from books to life before religious education becomes effective. The lecture system is as much the curse of the church as it is of the university and college.

Intelligence in Christianity is not knowledge of past days and events but power to meet new situations of the twentieth century in the light of the ideals and principles of Jesus.

The only true education is that which is creative. "All creativeness is expansive", according to Overstreet.¹ He says that every situation which presents a problem is an invitation to create. Coe shares much the same point of view in his book, "What is Christian Education?" There he contrasts sharply the possibilities in creative education with those in transmissive education, which has been the dominant type through the years. The same idea of creativeness as an essential in education is part of the project principle.

The specific need in religious education is training in the art of being leaders in creative education, curriculum material which will permit and encourage this sort of

¹ Ibid. p. 231.

education (such material being far different from our present curriculum material), and an awakened consciousness on the part of the church as a whole of the need for this type of education. Creative education uses the contributions of the past and the book learning of the past and present. It uses the experience of others, both past and present, in its own creative endeavour.

Transmissive education is repetition. Creative education is constructive. Transmissive education makes for introspection and contractiveness. Creative education makes for expansiveness.

Another contribution of mental hygiene to religious education is its emphasis on the necessity of getting the "psychological poisons" out of the mental system. The psychological processes result in the manufacture of poisons, which must be cast out. Such occurs when an idea once excellent and serviceable becomes outgrown because it remains unchanged with change going on all around it. The church and religion are full of many such ideas. Loyalty to creedal statements, to old theologies, to ways of doing things that were a step forward in their time, but now have been superseded by still better ways are such ideas. An unquestioning faith in the present economic system is an evidence of such a poison in the system. Perhaps the idea of war is such a poison. It may have had a rightful place in days gone

by, when the rule of force was the only rule possible, although it is hard to conceive of a situation when the way of goodwill would not have been more beneficial and more effective.

Emotions that do not find expression result in poisons in the mental system. We have mentioned above the need for adequate expression. The dangers of suppression are well known. A suppressed emotion needs to be brought out into the open and into livable relationship with the rest of the personality. This involves re-education. Sublimation, according to Overstreet, is not only the lot but also the privilege of all of us.¹ It makes possible expression that would otherwise be impossible. Religious education should offer help to all individuals in attaining a satisfactory sublimation of their urges.

Mental hygiene will never make its fullest contribution to the work of the church until the ministers of the church understand a great deal more about the nature of personality, of the ways in which it seeks to evade reality and the paths along which it can be brought back to reality again, and of the symptoms which indicate mental instability, etc. It is a supreme tragedy that this all important matter is so widely neglected in most of the seminaries of the country.

The prospective minister needs a sound psychological training, and not that based on the psychology of twenty

¹ Ibid. p. 249.

years ago, either. He needs to study mental difficulties, either from case records or from actual cases. Merely reading classifications and descriptions apart from actual cases will never enable him to recognize or deal with the situation when he is faced with such a problem. He needs a thorough study of group behavior, in addition to that of individual behavior. He needs in all of this, experience under supervision in actually meeting and treating those who are suffering from mental maladjustments. The statement of Barnes is well worth pondering in seminary circles. He says, "All too long the gratuitous assumption has been made that the grace of ordination would somehow be sufficient to replace an ignorance of human personality".¹

It is far more important that the minister know persons, their needs and problems, than that he be able to classify the pottery recovered from buried cities in the holy land. And it is far more important that he know the available agencies and individuals in his community who are prepared to deal intelligently with mental difficulties than that he know the histories of the various theological doctrines as they have come down through the centuries.

There is need for the minister who is out in the field to take "refresher" courses which will help him to keep posted on the developments in psychology, and especially in this important practical field of mental hygiene.

"Is There a Technique for the Cure of Souls"- Religious Education, Sept. 1929.

The minister is in a position of especial responsibility because his advice carries with it the sanction of religion and the church. How extremely important it is that advice which affects the individual so vitally as does counsel regarding his mental health and stability be sound.

The minister also occupies a unique position due to his parental relationship with his flock. Religion has been man's chief source of comfort in time of trouble and stress. To the minister there comes, then, the responsibility for guiding, comforting, advising, helping and even healing. The contributions which mental hygiene can make to his effectiveness in all of these functions is tremendous. The minister faces many family troubles. These are often caused by lack of adjustment between husband and wife. Mental hygiene may be able to show the way out, to indicate the real cause or causes of the lack of harmony and the remedy. The fact that "insane" people so often are possessed of religious ideas in their delusions is another indication of the position which religion occupies as their last hope before losing "sanity". As such it fills the whole thoughts and colors the delusions of many people who are losing their mental balance and health.

Another lesson which mental hygiene can teach the minister is the value of positive teachings. "Go thou and do - -" is ever so much more effective than

presenting "don'ts." Especially to those in difficulty who perhaps are conscious of having sinned and are profusely repentant, and see no hope for the future, or who perhaps have suffered grief that seems to rob all of life of its beauty and hope; - to such the way out is often found in constructive activity. And to those who are facing temptations of one kind or another, how futile is the quoting of sage advice, even from the Bible, when the temptation is on them. But activity, activity that interests and carries a sense of worthwhileness, that often will provide an outlet for pent up energies that is distinctly wholesome.

The whole tenor of the teaching and the preaching (good preaching, of course, is thoroughly educational) of the church should be striving for the Abundant Life. Not a series of prohibitions, but a series of challenges to live, to do, to act.

The minister or other church worker who would serve effectively as a healer of mental ill health, needs to know the resources of his community. He needs to know what is available in the way of social work, and what sort of problem needs that kind of attention. He needs to know the psychiatrist and the psychologist who are best capable of meeting the needs of the mentally unstable, and what sort of problems need their attention. Too often the minister thinks he is qualified to be social worker, psychiatrist and priest all by himself. His work on

that basis cannot help but be lacking in effectiveness, if not positively harmful. These are all specialized fields. And the minister should realize that part of the work of his specialized field consists in using those who are specialists in other fields when their help is needed. The minister is in a sense the one who is most vitally interested in the whole being of the person in trouble. He uses others who are specialists in various phases of difficulty, and coordinates their work and his own into an integrated whole. But let him not fall into the error of assuming that a couple of courses in psychology and reading a few books make him a competent psycho-analyst.

The help which mental hygiene can give religious education in achieving its aims is to a considerable extent help in treating individuals. This individual "cure of souls" seems to have been rather lost sight of by religious education in its first emphasis on the possibilities of group education. But there is a place for both individual and group work in the truly comprehensive program of religious education.

A minister who is going to successfully help individuals meet their troubles must first understand himself. The more he knows of his own complexes, his own phobias, his own fixations, the more will he be able to remove their warping effect from his judgment on the problems of others. One who would "cure sould" needs to be

free from prejudices and such unconscious influences within himself. Otherwise he interprets the other's troubles in the light of his own background.

And then, too, how can a man effectively help others to find a way out of their troubles which he has not been able to find for himself. That is just as hopeless an attempt as is the effort to teach the Abundant Way of Life when one does not experience that Way of Life himself.

The confessional, in varied forms, is coming into more or less popularity among Protestant ministers. Fosdick has encouraged its use, and experiments in several other places have been made. The confessional as thus used in Protestantism is of course not for the purpose of giving absolution, as in the Catholic church. Rather it seeks to fulfill the principle which mental hygiene emphasizes of the importance for the mental health of the individual of avoiding repression of unsavory thoughts and acts, and of the value, very often extremely large, that comes to a person when they talk over confidentially with a person whom they trust their troubles and their sins. The minister who would succeed as a "confessor" in this sense, must have the qualifications of a good listener. Listening is truly a fine art, and often is more important than speaking, no matter how sage the advice which would be forthcoming. It involves the "drawing out" of the troubled person by skillful questioning. This means

questioning that gets at the bottom of the trouble without using leading questions, but rather takes the longer way of approaching through the individual's own thought processes.

Then, too, the minister or religious educator who would play the part of father-confessor needs to have in mind a definite goal for his "patient", and to be able to indicate constructive steps toward its achievement. And there is an even greater need for the ability to generate that intangible thing called creative power within the troubled breast.

Many a minister falls down on his job because of lack of time, or lack of willingness to take time. The first interview with one in trouble of this sort often gets enough time, but the subsequent interviews, and the "follow up", without which there is almost no chance of any permanent good being done, is often neglected or hurried, generally through the feeling that the real work was done in the first interview, and now all that needs to be done is to keep an eye on the "patient" to see that he doesn't "slip". That is not the case. Help of this kind is essentially an educative process. New ways of thinking and acting need to be taught. This means that there must be a continuous patient effort to guide this life that is embarking on a new course. The initial movement is comparatively easy. There is the desire to find a way out. There is confidence in the minister. There is the

willingness to try anything that offers a ray of hope. There is the challenge of something new. But the persistent application to the lines of development laid down is not so easy. Hence the minister who would effectively help any one to greater mental stability must be prepared to give of time without stint, to listen patiently to the same things over and over again, to be able to generate creative power, not once, but many times. This way out is educative, and because it is such it requires all the time, patience, tact and skill of any really educative process. There are no time short-cuts to mental health.

The interest in mental hygiene as a part of the work of the church has stimulated several mental hygiene clinics. Blackman tells about one such at the Linwood Boulevard Christian Church in Kansas City.¹ Begun under the leadership of a well known and extremely capable doctor it has progressed to the point where those in charge feel that they can do the work themselves, after assuring themselves of the physical fitness of the patient. Legal difficulties are turned over to an attorney, religious difficulties turned over to a minister, etc. With the withdrawal of the physician in charge this work is being merged into the regular conference hours of the ministers, although maintaining all the strictly scientific basis as before. The results of this new approach are not yet available. It would seem to the casual observer to be rather a step backward, but

¹ Earl A. Blackman- "Mental Hygiene Clinic in the Church" "Religious Education" for Sept. 1949, p. 636.

that would probably be decided by the skill of the ministers in charge in doing the work done by a physician before.

Somewhat the same sort of experiment was undertaken by the Mount Pleasant Congregational Church of Washington, D.C. The service there was for all who were in trouble, physical, financial, moral, or social. The procedure in this life adjustment center, as it is called, was as follows: The individual attending the center first tells his whole story to an expert social worker. This is all, of course, in strict confidence. With this story as a basis the social worker sends the person to the source which in his judgment can be of most help to them. The offices of the various members of the staff all open on a reception room, which is attractively furnished. The patient may be sent to a physician, a psychiatrist, or other specialist. The staff maintained at that time (1929) consisted of two physicians, five psychiatrists, one of them a specialist in children's problems, a director of religious education, a general counsellor and the minister himself. Three hundred and fifty conferences were held during a three month's period.

While not many churches would be able to approach this sort of a clinic, somewhat the same sort of work can be done by the minister who has friendly social workers, physicians, psychiatrists, etc. in the community to whom he can send in all confidence people who need their help.

CHAPTER V

Religious education and mental hygiene go hand in hand for part of the way. Both are interested in the well-rounded development of personality, in the formation of mentally stable and balanced individuals. Religious education certainly shares with mental hygiene its aim of helping individuals find the satisfactions of life in reality, rather than in unreality.

When the principles of mental hygiene are more completely put into practice in the educational program of the church that program will find itself possessed of a new effectiveness. Religious education today needs the renewed emphasis on the importance of individual work, and the necessity of careful training for that work, which mental hygiene brings. Not that group teaching should receive any less attention, but that there should be the consciousness of the fact that after all groups are collections of individuals, and part of the problems of life are individual problems.

Let it not be thought that the theme of this discussion is that mental hygiene and religious education are identical in their aims and methods, or that mental hygiene is in any sense capable of replacing religious education. Part of the way they go hand in hand. There is a long way beyond where religious education goes alone. Mental hygiene seeks, to a large extent, the adjustment of the individual to his environment in such a way that

he can attain the satisfactions which every personality craves in reality, rather than being forced into evasions of reality. This aim, as indicated above, religious education shares. But religious education also is seeking to develop those characters which will at times of great challenge seek the satisfactions of life in bringing to pass a reality which has not yet been realized. In other words, to some extent mental hygiene shares with sociology the attempt to promote the happiness of mankind by relating them harmoniously to their environment. This religious education also seeks, but it seeks as well personality powerful enough to rise up at times and remold that environment itself. Or perhaps that remolding process is going on continuously. Certainly, if that is the case, its progress at times is more rapid and more visible than at others.

Mental hygiene makes no specific mention of the universal power we call God. But it is dealing with the established laws of God in all its work. The orderliness of the mental universe, corresponding to that of the physical universe, is all that makes possible a science of psychology.

The motivation behind mental hygiene is the desire to attain the greatest happiness for the individual, for oneself. The religion of Jesus certainly doesn't neglect to emphasize the enduring satisfactions of life that come

through the Abundant Life, but they are not the primary object of such living. Rather is the good of all, that of my neighbor as well as myself, put as the supreme goal to be sought. Mental hygiene could be interpreted in this way also, but such interpretation would hardly be strictly true.

May religious education and mental hygiene walk much more closely over that portion of the way which they travel together. There are many problems affecting human welfare and human happiness which they must face together.

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